



Dear Colleagues,

Every July, we proudly recognize Disability Pride Month and, specifically, National Disability Independence Day on July 26. This significant day marks the anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) being signed into law in 1990, a monumental step towards ensuring equal opportunities and rights for individuals with disabilities. National Disability Independence Day is also a time to acknowledge the ongoing efforts and achievements of individuals with disabilities.

At Southcoast Health, we are committed to the full inclusion of all qualified individuals in the workforce and ensuring that people who are disabled (deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, deaf-disabled, visually impaired, neurodivergent, orthopedically impaired, experience mental health or any other disabilities) are provided reasonable accommodation to perform their jobs.

In support of this commitment, we established the More Abilities Employee Resource Group (ERG) more than a year ago. This group serves as a resource for employees with disabilities or special needs, caregivers of people with disabilities or special needs, and allies. As part of our July celebrations, we are excited to announce new leadership within the More Abilities ERG:

- **Beth Barker, VP-HR Services:** Beth will be joining as the new Executive Sponsor, replacing Tonya Johnson. Beth brings a personal connection and a wealth of experience as a parent of a daughter with disabilities.
- **Amy Trautman, TL-Rehabilitation Services:** Amy has stepped into the role of co-chair, joining Karen Dockery, to help lead the ERG. Amy's professional and personal experiences, working with children with disabilities at Southcoast's pediatric rehabilitation center and raising a son with disabilities, make her a valuable addition to the More Abilities leadership team.

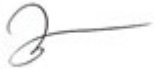
We have also partnered with several organizations, including the MA Rehabilitation Commission, Bridgewater State University and Bristol Community College to increase our number of hires and volunteers with disabilities or special needs. We are excited that these organizations will connect us to this highly untapped labor market, addressing the staffing crisis while bringing a diverse set of skills and perspectives to Southcoast.

We encourage all employees to engage with the More Abilities ERG and help foster an inclusive environment for everyone. All are invited to join the activities planned for July 24:

- **Lunch & Learn from 12 to 1pm via Teams:** Tips on Advocating at IEP Meetings by Melissa Gagne, attorney. Details coming soon.
- **Tour of Southcoast Health's new Pediatric Rehabilitation clinic:** Meet at 4:30pm at 4543 Acushnet Ave in New Bedford (pending management approval for those who are working that day).

Thank you for your continued commitment to making Southcoast Health a place where diversity and inclusion are celebrated every day. Let's honor Disability Pride Month and National Disability Independence Day by renewing our commitment to accessibility, equity and respect for all.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. De Simon Johnson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Lauren De Simon Johnson
Senior Vice President and Chief Human Resources Officer